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When the Elders of Zion relocated to Eurabia

Conspiratorial racialisation in antisemitism and Islamophobia

Reza Zia-Ebrahimi¹

Abstract

This article's objective is two-fold. First, to argue that antisemitism and Islamophobia display similar dynamics in representing their target population as a different and antagonistic race (a process referred to as "racialisation"). Second, to suggest that conspiracy theories of the "world Jewish conspiracy" type or their Islamophobic equivalent "Islamisation of Europe" type, are powerful enablers of racialisation, something that the literature has so far neglected. In pursuing these two interrelated objectives, the article offers a textual comparison between two conspiracy theories featuring Jews and Muslims. The first is *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903), the notorious forgery claiming to be the minutes of a meeting of Jewish leaders planning to take over Europe and the world. This text is largely considered to be at the very heart of modern-day antisemitism and an essential ingredient of the ideational context of the Holocaust. The second is *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab axis* (2005), a pamphlet by polemicist Bat Ye'or, claiming to have uncovered another ominous conspiracy, that of Muslims to turn Europe into Eurabia, a dystopic land where jihad and Sharia Law rule and where non-Muslims live in a state of subjection. It is argued that despite some differences in format, the two texts display strikingly similar internal dynamics in their attempt to racialise Jews and Muslims as the ultimate "other" determined to destroy "us". This process is referred to as conspiratorial racialisation.

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There is a subterranean world where pathological fantasies disguised as ideas are churned out by crooks and half-educated fanatics for the benefit of the ignorant and superstitious. There are times when this underworld emerges from the depths and suddenly fascinates, captures, and dominates multitudes of usually sane and responsible people, who thereupon take leave of sanity and responsibility.

Norman Cohn, 1995.

The realisation that antisemitism and Islamophobia might have more in common than meets the eye is fairly recent. It was only in 1985 that Edward Said suggested that “hostility to Islam in the modern Christian West has historically gone hand in hand with, has stemmed from the same source, has been nourished at the same stream as antisemitism”.² Said never pursued his intuition on this matter any further, and it is only in the ten years or so that a handful of authors picked up the torch where he left it.³ One such author is Gil Anidjar, whose approach to this issue took the form of a study of the nineteenth-century idea of a “Semitic race”. This is a racial construct that encompasses both Jews and Arabs as speakers of Semitic languages, but Anidjar expands his analysis beyond language to encompass the subtle interplay between religion – what Judaism and Islam are – and race – which Jews and Arabs became.⁴ This process is referred to as racialisation, and as noted by Brian Klug, it is at the heart of the burgeoning field of Islamophobia studies.⁵

The historical moment when Jews became racialised has already been investigated. Hannah Arendt and Léon Poliakov argued several decades ago that sometime in the nineteenth century, pre-modern religiously-informed Jew-hatred, made way for modern pseudo-scientific racial antisemitism.⁶ In other terms Jews slipped from being a religious group to being a race (tellingly, the first volume of Poliakov’s *Histoire de l’antisémitisme* is entitled “The age of faith”, while the second volume is entitled “The age of science”). This classical reading of the history of antisemitism seems to suggest that religion and race must be kept separate, that one precedes the other as in a neat sequence. As far as Muslims are concerned, conventional wisdom also has it that while racial theorists could claim that Jews and Arabs were a race, they could possibly not make the same claim about Muslims who hail from a wider – in fact global – set of ethnic backgrounds. We seem to be haunted by the most recurrent line of defence of today’s Islamophobe: “I am no racist because Islam is not a race”.

² Edward W Said, “Orientalism reconsidered,” *Cultural Critique* (1985).

³ For an overview of the field see Farid Hafez, “Comparing anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: The state of the field,” *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 3, no. 2 (2016); Important publications on the topic include but are not limited to Matti Bunzl, *Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Hatreds old and new in Europe* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2007); Gil Anidjar, *Semites: race, religion, literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); James Renton and Ben Gidley, eds., *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A shared story?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Fernando Bravo López, *En casa ajena: bases intelectuales del antisemitismo y la islamofobia* (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2012); Brian Klug, “The limits of analogy: Comparing Islamophobia and antisemitism,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 5 (2014); Ivan Davidson Kalmar, “Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: The formation of a secret,” *Human Architecture* 7, no. 2 (2009); Thomas Linehan, “Comparing antisemitism, Islamophobia, and asylophobia: the British case,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12, no. 2 (2012); Nasar Meer and Tehseen Noorani, “A sociological comparison of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment in Britain,” *The Sociological Review* 56, no. 2 (2008).

⁴ Anidjar, *Semites*. 17-18.

⁵ Brian Klug, “Islamophobia: A concept comes of age,” *Ethnicities* 12, no. 5 (2012).

⁶ See Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1973 [1951]); and Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l’antisémitisme*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1991 [1956-77]).

Anidjar, following other scholars of race before him, argues that this classical distinction between religion and race is too neat and unsatisfactory.⁷ He offers us an alternative view by deploying Foucault and Derrida to claim that race and religion have a lot in common because they are both regimes of marks and meanings⁸, which implies that religion can be *a marker for racial distinction*. This is slightly different from the concept of racialisation that has been discussed by scholars of racism such as Michael Banton and Robert Miles.⁹ Miles defines racialisation as synonymous with ‘racial categorization’, understood as ‘a process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or *biological* (usually *phenotypical*) characteristics’ (my emphases).¹⁰ In spite of its significant contribution to scholarship, this definition suffers from a shortcoming: it assumes that race can only be a biological or phenotypical category, and this is where the contribution of scholars of antisemitism has been so important in showing that race is also a cultural category.¹¹ In fact, we can argue that biological racism is only one, and rather marginal, form of racism; the population targeted by racism is always partly if not wholly defined in cultural, including religious, terms. One should bear in mind that the philologists who first coined the idea of a “Semitic race” – chiefly Ernest Renan (1823-1892) – did not consider race to be about biology, but a psychological and moral essence shaped by language *and religion*.¹² Consistent with this, Renan more often than not blurred the distinction between Arabs and Muslims, and applied his unfavourable views of Semites in their Arab variety to all Muslims very much indistinctive of cultural or even linguistic specificities. Indeed, for him, Islam – this product of the Semitic mind manifesting itself in the Arabic language – was the true carrier of race.

To add a layer of complexity to these conceptual issues, we must also acknowledge that Semitic philologists considered religion to be a fundamental element of the Semites’ racial characteristics. Semites were represented as the race “who invented religion”.¹³ Thus, Europe – conceptualised as secular and rational – constructed Jews as its internal, and Arabs/Muslims as its external, religious hence superstitious and irrational, “other”.

Anidjar’s argument on religion as a racial marker is only one example of how the issue of the racialisation of Muslims is being treated by the scholars who study antisemitism and Islamophobia alongside each other. Racialisation is paramount: only a demonstration of the racialisation of Jews and Muslims would justify the concurrent analysis of antisemitism and Islamophobia as two comparable cases of racism. In this endeavour, Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood have argued that examining the modalities of such racialisation holds the promise to significantly expand our understanding of Islamophobic discursive mechanisms by allowing us to use the repertoire of explanations developed

⁷ His predecessors include Fredrickson and Bethencourt. See George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A short history* (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002). 4, 327 and 70; and Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the twentieth century*. chap. 18 inter alia.

⁸ Anidjar, *Semites*. 17-18.

⁹ Michael Banton, *Race relations* (Tavistock Publications, 1967); Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism*, 2nd ed. ed. (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁰ Miles and Brown, *Racism*. 100.

¹¹ For a discussion of these issues see Rohit Barot and John Bird, "Racialization: the genealogy and critique of a concept," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 4 (2001).

¹² See for instance Maurice Olender, *The languages of paradise: race, religion, and philology in the nineteenth century* (Harvard University Press, 1992 [1989]). chap. 4.

¹³ Anidjar, *Semites*. 8.

over the years in the sociology of race and racism.¹⁴ In this endeavour, antisemitism provides not only a precedent of racialisation, but also a point of comparison.

My intention with this overview of the racialisation debate is to argue that by focusing on the dialectics of religion and race scholars have come a long way, but have neglected a fundamental enabler of racialisation: conspiracy thinking.¹⁵ More specifically myths of world Jewish conspiracy, and their Islamophobic equivalent, myths of Islamisation. While it is recognised that myths of world Jewish conspiracy are central to modern antisemitism, myths of Islamisation are sorely understudied. And a comparative study of antisemitic and Islamophobic conspiracy theories is currently not the subject of any in-depth analysis.¹⁶

Scholars of antisemitism argue that the myth of the world Jewish conspiracy is not some peripheral or accidental development grafting itself on existing but independent forms of Jew-hatred, but a core component of modern antisemitism and the ideational context of the Holocaust.¹⁷ It is also generally recognised by the same authors that the world Jewish conspiracy, rather than a nineteenth-century novelty, in fact reconnects with some of the most ancient apocalyptic beliefs and forms of Jew-hatred, as found in medieval Europe. For Norman Cohn, these myths are modern echoes of ancient demonological traditions that saw Jews as the children of the Devil and the implacable enemies of the Christian faith.¹⁸

Conspiracy thinking can even go hand in hand with biological racism. Nazis were obsessed with Jewish conspiracies on the one hand, and the biological opposition between the Aryan and the Semitic races on the other. This combination led Adolf Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg to the belief that an apocalyptic showdown between Aryans and Jews was inevitable.¹⁹ Myths of world Jewish conspiracy came to be perceived as prophecies that forewarned the confrontation between Aryan and Jew, an eschaton that could only be avoided if “we” strike first. What this conspiratorial-racial nexus also shows is that the term “pseudo-scientific racism” is perhaps misleading as it does not take into account the fact that scientific ideas – although “pseudo” in the sense that they were empirically flawed – could be intertwined with openly romantic, mythical, superstitious and apocalyptic *beliefs* crystallising around a conspiracy theory.

In sum, I would like to propose that one of the most promising areas of historical research is the comparative examination of conspiracy theories featuring Jews and Muslims. This line of enquiry can

¹⁴ Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, "The racialisation of Muslims," in *Thinking through Islamophobia: Global perspectives*, ed. S. Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Nasar Meer, "Racialization and religion: Race, culture and difference in the study of antisemitism and Islamophobia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013).

¹⁵ For general discussions and definitions, see David Coady, *Conspiracy theories: The philosophical debate* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); and Cass R. Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, "Conspiracy theories: Causes and cures," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no. 2 (2009).

¹⁶ Although Kundnani has touched on the similarity and the transition from one to the other. See Arun Kundnani, *The Muslims are coming! Islamophobia, extremism, and the domestic war on terror* (London & New York: Verso Books, 2014). 242 et seq.

¹⁷ Norman Cohn, *Warrant for genocide: The myth of the Jewish world conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif, 1996 [1967]). Also see many of the essays in Richard Allen Landes and Steven T. Katz, *The paranoid apocalypse: A hundred-year retrospective on the Protocols of the elders of Zion*, Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies series (New York; London: New York University Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*. 26.

¹⁹ David Redles, "The turning point: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and the eschatological war between Aryans and Jews," in *The paranoid apocalypse: A hundred-year retrospective on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, ed. Richard Landes and Steven T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

shed a new light on the common mechanisms operating in the antisemitic and Islamophobic imaginaries, while also providing us with case studies to examine processes of racialisation. These conspiracy theories not only otherise the Jew or the Muslim, but also aim to demonstrate their profound enmity towards “us”. More: their desire to annihilate us. This is very much a process of racialisation: it defines a group, it describes its presumed psychological and moral essence, and on that basis it proclaims the unbridgeable opposition between “us” and “them”. That being said, all conspiracy theories cannot be cases of racialisation. A conspiracy featuring Freemasons or the Illuminatis does not racialise the members of these secret societies whose membership is voluntary and not the result of some inherent human characteristic. In other terms, one is not born a Freemason, but one is born a Jew or a Muslim. Conspiracy is not in and of itself sufficient for racialisation, but can be supplementary to cultural, religious or biological racialisation. One way to look at it is to see these conspiracies as the last stage of racialisation, bringing it to perfection. The “other” is there, racialised, now he embodies the figure of the ultimate enemy out for our destruction.

I would like to broach this enquiry into race and conspiracy, antisemitism and Islamophobia, not by offering an abstract theoretical reflection, but by very concretely comparing two conspiracy theories. The first is *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a notorious forgery claiming to be evidence of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. The second is *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab axis*, a book claiming to uncover another conspiracy, that of Muslims to take over Europe, a sombre scheme commonly referred to as the “Islamisation of Europe”. I will argue that despite significant differences in the formats of the two texts, their internal dynamics and ultimate objectives are for all intents and purposes identical: the essentialisation of a large and arguably diverse population into a monolithic group animated by only one will, that of dominating Europe and ultimately obliterating western civilisation. This dynamic I call conspiratorial racialisation.

Conspiratorial racialisation and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

I hope to be forgiven to present only a condensed summary of *The Protocols*. This article is more concerned with *Eurabia* for a simple reason: whereas *The Protocols* have been subjected to some scholarly scrutiny, most notably by Norman Cohn in his seminal *Warrant for genocide*, there is currently only one serious academic monograph systematically deconstructing the myth of Islamisation, and that is Raphaël Liogier’s *Le Mythe de l’islamisation : essai sur une obsession collective*. *Eurabia* more specifically has rarely been the subject of systematic scholarly attention. By scrutinising this puzzlingly popular incarnation of the myth of Islamisation, I aim to redress this fault, hoping that the reader in need of specifics about *The Protocols* won’t mind being referred to secondary literature.

The Protocols were first published in Russian in 1903, and immediately captured the imagination of a large and diverse antisemitic public. The text emerged in a Europe beset by the inexorable march of modernity and the dislocations this process brought about. In this era, prone to political violence and extremism, seemingly incomprehensible socio-political processes such as the French Revolution, the 1848 revolutions, the First World War or the October Revolution, were often explained and made digestible through conspiracy theories. These often featured freemasons, Illuminati, Jesuits, socialists, anarchists and of course Jews. The dubious modes of production of these conspiracy theories have been fictionalised in Umberto Eco’s riveting yet frightening 2010 novel *The Prague cemetery*.

As a text, *The Protocols* pose as the minutes of a secret meeting of Jewish leaders referred to as “the Elders of Zion”. We are told that these leaders gather once in a century in the eerie atmosphere of Prague’s old Jewish cemetery to report on their secret activities. Although the author of *The Protocols*

remains unknown to this day, some scholars particularly Cohn have suggested that the text may have been commissioned by the *Okhrana*, the international branch of Tsarist Russia's secret police. The *Okhrana*, according to this theory, was keen to discredit attempts to liberalise Tsarist Russia by presenting them as Jewish plots. As the Elders of Zion thunder in *The Protocols*, "Such was, until recent times, the Russian autocracy, the one and only serious foe we had in the world, without counting the Papacy" (Protocol XV, A)²⁰. Some authors disagree²¹, but whatever the origins of the text, *The Protocols* themselves claim to be much more than a mere anti-Russian or anti-liberal plot. The Elders of Zion outline a scheme to dominate the world through the establishment of an "international Super-Government" (Protocol IX, B). Some passages even hint at a possible project to exterminate the Gentiles: "We are interested in [...] the killing of the goyim" (Protocol III, B).

The means deployed by the Elders of Zion to achieve their goal of domination are multiple. One of them is nothing less than the complete infiltration of every gentile institution – governments, political parties, armies, banks, media, universities, schools, and so on – in order to "create ferments, discords, and hostility" (Protocol VII, A). This is made possible by the use of the seemingly unlimited means of Jewish finance: "In our hands is the greatest power of our day – gold" (Protocol XXII). In addition to gold, Jews can marshal the power of the media to shape public opinion at will: "the means of that so-called 'Great Power' – the Press, which, with a few exceptions that may be disregarded, is already entirely in our hands" (Protocol VII, B). In order to prepare the ground for their ultimate onslaught, the Jews must first "debilitate the public mind by criticism" (Protocol V, D). This is an allusion to the claim that Jews are behind all the ideologies and philosophies that challenge the *status quo* (and thus destabilise the world): "think carefully of the successes we arranged for Darwinism, Marxism, Nietzsche-ism" (Protocol II, B).

The Elders of Zion's plan for the world is then summarised in this dramatic declaration:

"and the weapons in our hands are limitless ambitions, burning greediness, merciless vengeance, hatreds and malice. It is from us that the all-engulfing terror proceeds. We have in our service persons of all opinions, of all doctrines, monarchists, demagogues, socialists, communists, and utopian dreamers of every kind. We have harnessed them all to the task" (Protocol IX, B).

Dhimmitude and the background to Bat Ye'or's *Eurabia*

Eurabia was first published in English in 2005. Its author is Gisèle Littman (née Orebi), a Swiss-Israeli author. She uses the penname Bat Ye'or, which is Hebrew for "daughter of the Nile", as she was born in Egypt to European Jewish parents. Along with many non-native families, the Orebis were forced to leave Egypt in 1957, after the Suez Crisis. After a brief detour via London where Gisèle met and married David Littman, the couple moved to Lausanne in Switzerland.

David Littman was famously involved in Operation Mural in the early 1960s. This was a secret effort by Israel's secret services Mossad to counter Morocco's policy of restricting Jewish emigration. The operatives sent Jewish children to a phoney summer camp in Switzerland and from there facilitated their *Aaliyah* to Israel. Littman received a "Hero of Silence" decoration in Israel in 2009 for his contribution to Operation Mural. The background of both Littmans – David's involvement with Operation Mural and Bat Ye'or's own experience of exodus from Egypt – seems to have triggered a

²⁰ *The Protocols* are available in many editions. The citations in this article are taken from Victor E. Marsden's standard translation, first published in 1923 (London: The Britons).

²¹ See Cesare de Michelis, *The non-existent manuscript: A study of the protocols of the Sages of Zion* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Michael Hagemeister, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: Between history and fiction," *New German Critique*, no. 103 (2008).

life-long quest to understand the issue between Arabs/Muslims and Jews. However, instead of dispassionately studying the Arab-Israeli conflict, or examining the exodus of non-native populations from Nasserist Egypt against a background of decolonisation and Arab-Israeli tensions, Bat Ye'or's attempt throughout her career has been to identify an ahistorical, immutable and violent essence in Muslims. This has led to two theories demonising them: dhimmitude and Eurabia.

As a concept, dhimmitude – derived from Arabic *dhimmi*, which refers to the status of non-Muslim subjects in an Islamic polity, protected but restricted – was developed in the 1980s and 90s.²² Bat Ye'or claims she has invented the term, but it had been previously used by Bashir Gemayel, a military commander during the Lebanese civil war.²³ Be that as it may, Bat Ye'or defines it as a permanent status of subjection without protection in which Jews and Christians have allegedly been held under Islamic rule since the eighth century, and which forces them to accept discriminations, or “face forced conversion, slavery or death”.²⁴ Those who have a vested interest in the veracity of dhimmitude and the demonisation of Muslims, be they Serbian nationalists in the 1990s²⁵ or self-proclaimed “counter-Jihadi” authors today, praise the theory to the sky. Serious scholars are less kind. The theory has been politely dismissed by Sidney Griffith, a historian of early Eastern Christianity, as “polemical” and “lacking in historical method”²⁶, while for Michael Sells, a scholar of Islamic history and literature, the dhimmitude theory is nothing more than “falsification” of history by an “ideologue”.²⁷ Although it is fair to say that most scholars have either ignored her, or treated her as an object of study rather than a peer.²⁸ She has however also benefitted from significant academic support, a subject I will come back to.

Eurabia, Islamisation, and the redux of conspiratorial racialisation

In many ways *Eurabia* is a sequel to Bat Ye'or's dhimmitude theory. It reduces Islam to an ahistorical and unchanging essence, which Bat Ye'or calls *jihad*. This essence remote-controls the minds of Muslims, who become – to use Said's metaphor – “watertight little containers” of the Islamic essence, “doomed to endless self-replication”.²⁹ Bat Ye'or thus follows in the footsteps of orientalist authors and racial thinkers alike in denying Muslims their individual agency, and representing them as prisoners of this all-encompassing essence of Islam or *jihad*. Under her pen, *jihad* has little to do with the conventional understandings of the term one can find in Islamic scholarship, and is inconsistently defined, the purpose being clearly to deploy a frightening term and associate its negative charge with all things Islamic, rather than be conceptually diligent. In places, *jihad* seems to be synonymous with dhimmitude: “a formal set of rules to govern relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims”, essentially “belligerency, temporary armistices, and submission”.³⁰ But in other places, *jihad* is the

²² Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*, trans. David Maisel, Paul Fenton, and David Littman (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985 [1980]); ———, *The decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From jihad to dhimmitude*, trans. Miriam Kochan and David Littman (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996 [1991]).

²³ For more on the origins of the term see Sindre Bangstad, *Anders Breivik and the rise of Islamophobia* (London: Zed, 2014). 148-49.

²⁴ Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005). 34.

²⁵ Sindre Bangstad, “Eurabia comes to Norway,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24, no. 3 (2013): 373.

²⁶ Sidney H. Griffith, “Review of Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to dhimmitude*, seventh–twentieth century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, no. 04 (1998).

²⁷ Michael A. Sells, “Christ killer, Kremlin, contagion,” in *The new crusades: constructing the Muslim enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi and Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

²⁸ For example Bangstad, “Eurabia comes to Norway.”

²⁹ Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*, Fully rev. ed. with a new introduction. ed. (London: Vintage, 1997 [1981]). 43.

³⁰ Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia*. 32.

same as in today's jihadist ideology: a call to arms against the West.³¹ Conceptual confusion and structural contradictions matter little in conspiracy theories, as they address an audience generally impervious to logical arguments.

Whatever the definition of the Islamic/*jihadi* essence, Bat Ye'or insists on its atemporality and immutable nature: "The entire Muslim world as we know it today is a product of this 1,300 year-old *jihad* dynamic".³² Few generalisations are as sweeping as Bat Ye'or's: Islam = *jihad* = the same everywhere and in all historical periods, QED. To illustrate her point, she thunders that an Al-Qaeda leader's calls for conversion and murder today "are not provoked by circumstantial modern events" but "they belong to a civilization created by and based on *jihad*, *jizya* [a poll tax] for infidels, and dhimmitude".³³ *Jihad* does more than define "Islamic civilisation", in fact the two are one and the same. This civilisation manifests itself through a handful of practices: "segregation of women and infidels, death for apostasy, 'honor' killings, female genital mutilation, and even the stoning of women".³⁴ To further drive her point home, she plunders the historical record for random acts of violence committed by individuals of Muslim background in places as diverse as East Timor and the Ivory Coast, and presents them as natural manifestations of the essence of Islamic/*jihadi* civilisation.³⁵ All alternative explanations are brushed aside as Islamic propaganda.

This diabolical Islamic civilisation is not sitting by idly, for how can evil be passive? It is actively scheming to create a new geopolitical unit, called Eurabia, encompassing both shores of the Mediterranean. In this dystopic land, sharia law and *jihad* ideology reign supreme, and Christians and Jews are subjected to a life of dhimmitude. *Eurabia* is therefore a theory of the Islamisation of Europe, and for Bat Ye'or Islamisation has already been partly achieved. That being said, *Eurabia* is not the first instantiation of the Islamisation genre. There are earlier versions, particularly Oriana Fallaci's *The rage and the pride* (2002) as well as a stream of American conservative writing aiming to show where European multiculturalism and social welfare states lead (a Muslim takeover).³⁶ As pointed out by Arun Kundnani, the United States are home to other forms of Islamophobic conspiracy theories, such as "stealth jihad" and the Shari'a conspiracy.³⁷ However it stands to reason that Bat Ye'or's *Eurabia* is the most influential Islamisation theory, and this paper will explain why. It is also remarkable in its planetary dimensions: the Eurabia variety of Islamisation is more than a conspiracy, it is a mega-conspiracy. It is also apocalyptic as the ultimate objective of the Eurabian project according to Bat Ye'or is nothing less than the destruction of western civilisation.

Following the narrative structure pioneered by many conspiracy theorists before her (from the Abbé Barruel to Henri Gougenot de Mousseaux), Bat Ye'or claims to have uncovered the scheme, and offers to expose its subterranean secrets. However, Bat Ye'or's conspirators are not secret societies (such as the Illuminati, Freemasons or indeed the Elders of Zion), but existing international or transnational organisations. Thus, she slightly departs from familiar conspiratorial practices by claiming that the Eurabia project is planned, directed and executed in broad day light, although we are somehow oblivious to it or numbed by propaganda. It remains however that Bat Ye'or attributes quasi-magical powers to these organisations, the most important being the Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD), that she presents as the force behind Islamisation and the creation of Eurabia.

³¹ Ibid., 31.

³² Ibid., 9.

³³ Ibid., 159.

³⁴ Ibid., 138.

³⁵ Ibid., 183-84.

³⁶ Bruce Pilbeam, "Eurabian nightmares: American conservative discourses and the Islamisation of Europe," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2011).

³⁷ Kundnani, *The Muslims are coming!* 247 et seq.

The EAD is an organisation that has genuinely existed and its members were the Arab League states and the European Economic Community (EEC). It was created following the 1973 Oil Crisis, and was for all intents and purposes buried in 1979 following the Camp David Accords. From the onset, the purpose of the organisation, beyond some vague talk of “cooperation” between Europe and the Arab League, was elusive.³⁸ From the absence of consensus on the EAD’s purpose, its lack of decision-making powers, its failure to achieve anything of note, and its sudden death, it is difficult not to conclude that it was yet another obscure talk-shop. However, it is precisely the organisation’s lack of notoriety that allows Bat Ye’or to creatively elevate it in her demonology to the status of “a formidable political and legal superstructure that encompasses the entire Euro-Arab relationship”.³⁹ The EAD, epitomising a conniving alliance between global Islam and the European institutions, thus becomes quite literally the mightiest organisation of all, one that can plan and implement nothing less than the dismissal of an entire civilisation. In this logic, Bat Ye’or keeps from mentioning the end of the EAD in 1979, maintaining the illusion that it still operates.

I should hasten to remind my readers that as a text, *Eurabia* is replete with contradictions. Even the origins of the Eurabian conspiracy, one of the central themes of the book, is attributed to several not entirely compatible causes. The main narrative traces the origins of the conspiracy to the Oil Crisis of 1973, which presumably placed European countries in the position of supplicants for Arab mercy. But in places, Bat Ye’or blames one specific European country for paving the way to the Eurabian project *before* the EAD: Gaullist France, which allegedly sacrificed Jewish and American interests to play the “Arab card”.⁴⁰ Elsewhere yet she traces the Eurabian project to no other than Hitler in person.⁴¹ In fact Eurabians are incessantly linked to antisemitism, Nazism and communism.⁴²

Coming back to the EAD, Bat Ye’or not only glosses over the crucial fact that the Arab League is among the most notoriously divided and inefficient international organisations according to most serious sources past and present, but she never quite specifies which states of the Arab League are the driving force behind *Eurabia*. For good reason: the devil is in the detail. Many Arab states in the 1970s, rather than Islamic states, were either nationalist or socialist, and instead of propagating *jihad* threw *jihadis* in jail or executed them. One has a hard time seeing how and why would Syria’s Hafez al-Assad, who massacred twenty thousand people in his 1982 campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood, or Libya’s Colonel Qadhafi who repressed Islamists throughout his 42-year rule, actively conspire to support global *jihad* and the Islamisation of Europe. For Bat Ye’or however, the Arab League can only be a manifestation of *jihad*, because all Muslims everywhere are prisoners of their Islamic/*jihadi* essence.

Be that as it may, for Bat Ye’or, the Arab states are clearly the stronger party in the EAD, so much so that they command the blind obedience of the European members. What makes them so powerful? Their presumably collective control over an unlimited supply of petrodollars. This assumption too runs in the face of historical facts, as practically all analysts agree that oil producers, Arab or otherwise, did never quite manage to use the oil weapon successfully.⁴³ The presumption that the oil weapon allows Arab states to direct the EAD and by extension the European Community and later Union is part of Bat Ye’or’s construction of an almighty Islamic/*jihadi* force fully controlling events

³⁸ Bernard Corbineau, "Le Dialogue Euro-Arabe: Instance du nouvel ordre international (1973-1978)," *Revue française de science politique* (1980): 562.

³⁹ Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*. 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² See for instance *Ibid.*, 93, 124, 50 and 56.

⁴³ See for instance Roy E. Licklider, "The failure of the Arab oil weapon in 1973–1974," *Comparative Strategy* 3, no. 4 (1982).

unfolding in Europe from behind the curtains. Bat Ye'or goes as far as to claim that Europe is in a relation of "vassalage" to the PLO.⁴⁴

The weapon of choice of Eurabians is part demographic, part cultural. Bat Ye'or argues that the members of the EAD, gathered in a seminar in Venice in 1977 "paved the way for the large-scale Arab and Muslim migration into Europe", and "envisioned the creation of a common culture encompassing the north and south shores of the Mediterranean".⁴⁵ This "speedy transfer" comprised the migrants' seemingly monolithic "culture" and "customs"; needless to say, of these millions of migrants absolutely none had any "intention of integrating into European society and culture", but aimed to "impose their own culture upon the host country" with the blessing of the EC.⁴⁶ The EAD and its avatars such as the Union for the Mediterranean have allegedly launched a misinformation campaign to idealise medieval multi-confessional Andalusia and exaggerate the Islamic contribution to western civilisation.⁴⁷ In this plot, it is suggested that Muslim immigrants are all active agents of the conspiracy, and possibly on the EAD's payroll: "Immigrant groups became vehicles to spread these prejudices throughout Europe, with the active collusion of academics, politicians and the whole of the EAD's cultural apparatus".⁴⁸

The first consequence of this Islamisation is the creeping in of "anti-Americanism, antisemitism/anti-Zionism and 'Palestinianism'". The EAD, as it joysticks Europe's "political, media and religious elites", secretly instils anti-American and "Judeophobic" feelings into Europe.⁴⁹ The EAD's declarations in support of the Palestinian people are used by Bat Ye'or to back her claim that *jihad* is penetrating Europe, as only submission to *jihad* can explain anyone's sympathy with the plight of the Palestinian people (who thus become crucial players in the Eurabian conspiracy).

What is the motivation of the European members of the EAD in bringing about Eurabia? There are several. One is greed. Bat Ye'or claims that the Arab states, through their full control over the price of oil, can offer the European party some material advantages, which she never specifies or details. There is a complete reversal of the asymmetry of power between Arab and European states, which contrary to her claims has always worked in favour of the European party. In all Euro-Arab or Mediterranean frameworks, be it the first bilateral cooperation agreements of the 1960s and 1970s, the Barcelona Process launched in 1995, the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004 or the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008, European states have always dictated their terms to their Arab counterparts, and never the other way around.⁵⁰ For example, despite the continuous pressure of the Arab states, the EU still resists the liberalisation of agricultural trade and the association agreements that are signed between the EU and the Arab partners impose quotas and high tariffs that protect European farmers from competitive Arab agricultural products.⁵¹ Yet, at the same time the association agreements have forced the Arab countries to open their markets to industrial products that come from the more competitive EU industries. The European Neighbourhood Policy pressures Arab Mediterranean countries not only to eliminate border controls for EU products, but to reduce non-

⁴⁴ Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia*. 203.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 93.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 94-95.

⁴⁷ Ibid., chapter 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 174.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 10 and 102.

⁵⁰ Richard Gillespie, "A 'Union for the Mediterranean' ... or for the EU?," *Mediterranean Politics* 13, no. 2 (2008); George Joffé, "The EU and the Mediterranean: Open regionalism or peripheral dependence," *European Union and New Regionalism: Regional Actors and Global Governance in a Post-Hegemonic Era*, 2nd edn (Aldershot: Ashgate) pp (2007); Patrick Holden, *In search of structural power: EU aid policy as a global political instrument* (Routledge, 2009); ———, "Hybrids on the rim? The European Union's Mediterranean aid policy," *Democratization* 12, no. 4 (2005).

⁵¹ Richard Gillespie, ed. *The Euro-Mediterranean partnership: Political and economic perspectives* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).

tariff barriers and to make painful reforms according to the EU *acquis* (such as reducing food subsidies and state procurements, or opening their services to international competition) for receiving EU aid and for getting access to the EU markets. The asymmetry of power between the EU and the Arab states is also evident when looking at the content of Arab regional initiatives. One of these is the Agadir Agreement, which promotes the liberalisation of industrial trade between its participants (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan).⁵² The EU offers technical support for the conclusion of the Agadir Agreement and its clauses reflect the EU regulations and standards. Actually in order to participate in the Agadir Agreement any new participant must first apply EU standards in their own markets.⁵³ The power of the EU is not demonstrated only in the economic aspect of Euro-Arab agreements, but also when someone sees the strict visa regime for Arab citizens who want to enter the EU and the Schengenization of the Arab countries that share borders with Europe. For many years the Arab Mediterranean countries have been operating as a buffer zone for reducing the entrance of migrants from Sub-Saharan countries into the EU and often the result of such pressures is the increase of racist violence in Arab Mediterranean cities.⁵⁴ Yet in Bat Ye'or, the EU is "an instrument of Arab policy".⁵⁵

A second reason Bat Ye'or gives for Europe's engagement in its own suicide is appeasement: in attempting to preserve its "*dar al-sulh* [friendly territory that has concluded an armistice with a majority Muslim state] position of subordinate collaboration, if not surrender, to the Islamists", Europe has found itself in "collusion with international terrorism" as epitomised by the Arab states.⁵⁶

The third motivation is political and in giving it Bat Ye'or entirely rewrites recent European history. Thus, the European project is not an alliance that came about in the context of postwar reconstruction and clearly anchored in the US-led effort to contain Soviet influence, but instead a "Franco-German plan to build a unified Europe linked to the Arab world – and as a rival to America".⁵⁷ Thus, the European project, in its very origins, becomes an ally of Islam/*jiḥād*. This reading of European history is quite novel to say the least. As it goes, from the beginning, Europe has been plotting to implement anti-Americanism, provide a safe haven to antisemites, and to blame terrorism on misguided US policies and Israel's injustice, *in order* to serve the interests of its masters: the Arab league members, in other terms Islam/*jiḥād*.⁵⁸ Anti-Americanism is a central element of Bat Ye'or's Europe, propagated as it is by "communists, Left-wingers, Third-Worldists and neo-Nazis", a motley crew that one has quite literally never seen allied towards a common cause.⁵⁹

It is also worth noting that *Eurabia* is written from the perspective of an Israeli ultranationalist. The Eurabian conspiracy is clearly linked to enmity towards Israel, which in Bat Ye'or's view – unsurprisingly – equals antisemitism. She digresses from her argumentation to thunder the rightfulness of the state of Israel and the illegitimacy of Palestinian claims – even to peoplehood – using a selective reading of Byzantine and Ottoman history.⁶⁰ The demonisation of Palestinians and particularly the PLO knows no limit: she contends that the "PLO's grievance against Israel" has nothing to do with a quest for statehood, but is in fact "based on Islamic *jiḥād* ideology and Judeophobia".⁶¹ That the PLO's ideology is nationalist, socialist and secular in outlook is

⁵² Christos Kourtelis, *The political economy of Euro-Mediterranean relations: European neighbourhood policy in North Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ulla Holm, *North Africa, a security problem for themselves, for the EU and for the US*, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) Report (Copenhagen 2008); Ruben Zaiotti, "Of friends and fences: Europe's neighbourhood policy and the gated community syndrome," *European Integration* 29, no. 2 (2007).

⁵⁵ Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia*. 70.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 77.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 225.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 24-5.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 75.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 49-50.

⁶¹ Ibid., 72.

unsurprisingly ignored, for in Bat Ye'or's view, Arabs/Muslims cannot, in light of their presumed racial essence, inscribed in every cell and gene, give allegiance to anything else than *jihad*. For her, the "land for peace and security" scheme "is the foundation of the Islamic *jihad*-dhimmitude system".⁶² All declarations by European politicians in favour of Palestinians are retroactively re-interpreted as the imposition of "Palestinianism" "on a reluctant European public opinion by a strong Arab and Western political and ideological alliance, including Third Worldists, Leftists, Communists and the extreme Right" (another improbable motley crew).⁶³ Bat Ye'or claims that Europe has enlisted in "the Arab-Islamic *jihad* against Israel", and that by doing so it has "effectively jettisoned its values and undermined the roots of its civilization", which presumably would call for unconditional support for Israel.⁶⁴ Bat Ye'or's enthusiasm for Israel is such that it sometimes causes her to depart from the academic style that she upholds in most of the book, and adopt the tone of airport novels, as in this unforgettable passage: "To this cause [Palestine], the EU devotes all the passionate fervor of a senile lover who sacrifices to his lust the ultimate shadow of an illusory dignity".⁶⁵

Relatedly, and to conclude, let us take note of Bat Ye'or's occasional penchant for occultism, a fundamental ingredient in conspiracy theories, often manifesting itself when an author sees links between unrelated events to draw outlandish conclusions. For instance, referring to the adoption on 10 November 1975 of the UN General Assembly's Resolution 3379 that labelled Zionism a form of racism, she enigmatically notes that "It was a year after Arafat's speech, and the thirty-seventh anniversary of the 1938 Nazi *Kristallnacht*".⁶⁶ The claim is that the three events were related in some occult and mystical way, which is left for the reader to work out.

To add to her reader's puzzlement, in the next paragraph she – perhaps unconsciously – uses an old antisemitic device by referring to "Muslim ritual murder", thus making hers the very terminology of traditional Jew-hatred.⁶⁷

The popularity of the "Islamisation" theory

Many would argue that a study of Bat Ye'or's work matters little in comparison with *The Protocols*. *The Protocols* were, the argument would go, one of the best-sellers of the interwar period, a hugely popular text, which provided a "warrant for genocide". Surely *Eurabia* is comparatively minor.

Eurabia matters far more than it would at first appear, if only because the Islamisation of Europe theory is universally upheld by populist parties across Europe.⁶⁸ Geert Wilders of the Dutch Party of Freedom, or Marine le Pen of France's National Front, are only two politicians who often claim that not electing them would ineluctably lead to the Islamisation of Europe. To the politicians should be added a long list of best-selling Islamophobic authors, from Bruce Bawer to Robert Spencer, Melanie Phillips to Mark Steyn, Renaud Camus to Michel Houellebecq.⁶⁹

What is far more alarming however, is that *Eurabia* enjoys some academic support as well. That Bernard Lewis – known for his sweeping generalisations about Arabs and Muslims – is one of them is

⁶² Ibid., 104.

⁶³ Ibid., 86.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 126 and 59.

⁶⁸ For an overview of the myth see Raphaël Liogier, *Le Mythe de l'islamisation : essai sur une obsession collective* (Paris: Seuil, 2012).

⁶⁹ On this latter, see Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, "There is no Islamophobic elephant in this room: A reflection on Houellebecq's Submission and its reception," *ReOrient Blog: Critical Muslim Studies* (2017).

perhaps not surprising, but that the late Sir Martin Gilbert, a prominent Oxford historian, and Niall Fergusson, a highly visible Harvard and Stanford fellow and best-selling author, have granted *Eurabia* a blanket endorsement⁷⁰ only shows the extent to which some members of the academy are happy to renounce their guardianship of critical thinking and rationality. The complicity of these scholars has played a central role in promoting Bat Ye'or as a "scholar of Islam". So has the external appearance of *Eurabia* with its battery of references, and its extensive citations, which gives it a false air of seriousness and respectability. In reality however, Bat Ye'or is anything but an expert: she does not hold any university degree, has never published peer-reviewed papers, and as mentioned above is not taken seriously by most scholars.

Bat Ye'or's Islamophobic theories also benefit from institutional support. The English version of *Eurabia* is published by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press in New Jersey. The only books on the subject of Islam published by this university press are authored or co-authored by Bat Ye'or herself or her late husband David Littman. The scholarly credentials of this university press are in need of some serious scrutiny. In 2006, Professor Robert S. Wistrich, one of the most prominent scholars of antisemitism and author of *The longest hatred*, invited Bat Ye'or to give a talk at the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.⁷¹ In his introduction, he praised her "scholarship" on dhimmitude and *Eurabia*. One can only be stupefied by the irony of this event, its guest and its host. Bat Ye'or was also invited to give a talk at Tel Aviv University's Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities and the Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies. Less puzzlingly perhaps, she has given briefings on Capitol Hill, twice in 1997 and once in 2002.

The list of her admirers would not be complete if one did not mention Anders Behring Breivik, the mass murderer who cold-bloodedly killed 77 people in 2011 to stop the Islamisation of Norway. In his manifesto entitled *2083: A European declaration of independence* that he distributed before committing his abomination, the words *Eurabia* and *Eurabian* appear 159 times, and Bat Ye'or is mentioned 62 times, with great deference.⁷²

Intertextual comparison

If one is to review the divergences between *The Protocols* and *Eurabia*, the format imposes itself as the most obvious place to start. Indeed, the two texts are – in appearance – of two very different types. *The Protocols* are a forgery, claiming to be the minutes of the secret meeting of the Elders of Zion in the Prague Jewish Cemetery, a meeting that never took place. We know since Philip Graves' famous 1921 article in *The Times* that the text of *The Protocols* largely paraphrases Maurice Joly's 1864 political satire *Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*. *Eurabia* on the other hand is an authentic text, which even – as mentioned above – parades as an academic study. Bat Ye'or makes incessant references to international organisations with their verbose designations and acronyms, reports on their too-regular summits and conferences flanked with exotic place-names, and she cites the arcane resolutions that came out of them. This format can easily lead un-critical readers to believe that they are holding some serious work of scholarship and erudition in their hands. In places it bores like a tedious survey of international law, making for a very different read than *The Protocols*.

This has consequences on where reality stops and fiction starts. *The Protocols'* text is fictional in the sense that all the quotations from the leader of the Elders of Zion have been either cooked up by the author, or lifted from other sources. *Eurabia's* quotations of European dignitaries and Muslim clergymen on the other hand are historically attested. The summits have really taken place. Fiction

⁷⁰ On *Eurabia's* back cover.

⁷¹ Adi Schwartz, "The protocols of the Elders of Brussels," *Haaretz* 20 June 2006.

⁷² For more on Breivik and his inspirations see Bangstad, *Anders Breivik and the rise of Islamophobia*.

starts with the interpretation of actual events, which are not only unconvincing to the discerning reader, but fanciful and outlandish in their conspiratorial dimension. For one thing, the quotations are assumed to hold quasi-magical power: typically, an utterance by a European politician that is not fiercely Islamophobic is presented as evidence for the advance of Islamisation. For instance, Bat Ye'or quotes the minutes of an EAD meeting where it was decided that academic studies of the Islamic contribution to European civilisation should be encouraged as yet another evidence for the unstoppable march of Islamisation. She also claims that Edward Said's work and the scholarship critically re-appraising orientalism proceed from EAD directives⁷³ (she calls Said "the chief promoter and principal agent of the West's cultural dhimmitude"⁷⁴). Of course no direct connection can be established between the EAD and Edward Said, but in a conspiratorial context facts are beside the point.

I would venture to hypothesise that the different formats indicate a divergence in authorial intention as well. The author of *The Protocols* was undoubtedly a professional forger, just like his fictional twin in Ecco's novel *The Prague cemetery*. As far as Bat Ye'or is concerned, however, nothing indicates that she does not believe in her own claims, quite the contrary. In other terms, while the author of *The Protocols* was a cynical falsifier, Bat Ye'or is a conspiracy theorist who believes in her own conspiracy theory.

My argument in this article is that there are three *functional* similarities between the two texts that overrule these differences in format and intention:

1. *Conspiratorial racialisation.*

Both texts racialise their target population into a unified, coherent, and recognisable pack, instinctively acting in unison, thus sharing fundamental *racial* characteristics. As we are in the realm of conspiracy thinking, what defines these groups is the conspiracy itself. Jews in *The Protocols* are not defined otherwise than through their conspiracy to dominate Europe and the world. As an adept reader of *The Protocols*, Hitler's view of Jews as one mass controlled by a conspiratorial essence is here a useful illustration. As Joseph Goebbels reports, in Hitler's view "In all the world [...] Jews are alike. Whether they live in a ghetto of the East or in the bankers' palaces of the City or Wall Street, they will always pursue the same aims and without previous agreement even use the same methods".⁷⁵ In other terms the Jew might not know it him/herself, but he/she is a Jew thus unconsciously working towards the realisation of the Jewish conspiracy.

Eurabia's Muslims are defined in a more complex manner. They are prisoners of their Islamic/*jihadi* essence, which defines their nature, and to which their absolute loyalty robotically goes. Through the deployment of this essentialised discourse, Bat Ye'or can for instance claim that secular Arab states or unrelated individual Muslims, all relentlessly strive to dominate Europe and the world through *jihad* and dhimmitude, almost unconsciously. What enables this foreboding unity is the immutable and atemporal nature of the Islamic/*jihadi* essence; she thus fully represents Muslims as a *race* with predefined and fixed behavioural and moral characteristics that are not contingent on individuality or even time and space. Although defined with more layers than the Jewishness of *The Protocols's* Jews, *Eurabia's* Muslims are still essentially the agents of a conspiracy. In both cases, narrating the conspiracy is part of the strategy of racialisation; or rather the conspiracy *is* the main marker of the race.

⁷³ Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia*. 189.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 239.

⁷⁵ Joseph Goebbels and Louis Paul Lochner, *The Goebbels diaries, 1942-1943* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970).

2. *Supernatural re-imagination.*

In both conspiracy theories, supernatural powers are attributed to the targeted population, as they are assumed to be not only superhumanly united, but also capable of bringing about the destruction of a civilisation.⁷⁶ This is the case even though the targeted population is, in the historical context of each conspiracy theory, among the most vulnerable groups in society. When *The Protocols* were written, Jews had not yet been emancipated in the Tsarist Empire (where most European Jews lived), and they were still victims of murderous pogroms. Even in western European states that had emancipated Jews, antisemitic practices of discrimination acted as significant obstacles to social ascension, while effective social ascension was perceived as a threat to some Gentiles. Yet, in *The Protocols*, it is believed that every injunction by the leader of the Elders of Zion is immediately followed by effects, as if by magic. Jews have masterminded the French Revolution (“we were the first to cry among the masses of the people the words ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’” [Protocol I, E]), industrialisation and socialism and have almost achieved their ultimate goal, becoming masters of the world. The weak is re-imagined as almighty. And diabolical.

A comparison between the situation of Jews in early-twentieth-century Europe and that of Muslims in the early twenty first century is a very complex topic laying clearly outside this article’s focus. What I would like to argue however, is that there is a similar disparity between the Muslims’ weak position in European societies, and the perceived power that they yield according to conspiratorial Islamophobia. In the countries with the largest Muslim minority (France, UK and Germany⁷⁷), individuals of Muslim background are divided along linguistic, cultural and ethnic lines, but also along widely varying degrees of acculturation. Needless to say, they are equally divided along religious or nonreligious lines, as Islam is as contested as any other system of beliefs, and not a supernatural “essence”. Olivier Roy for instance disputes the very existence of a “Muslim community”, which he calls a “fantasy” and contends that in its stead there is only “a scattered, heterogeneous population not very concerned with unifying itself”.⁷⁸ Some authors go so far as to reject the very existence of “Islam” as a coherent set of realities.⁷⁹ To compound the lack of social organisation, most European Muslims find themselves in the lower strata of the social scale, and are victims of quantifiable discriminations. In France for instance, there is evidence of discrimination in housing allocation⁸⁰, and a Muslim is 2.5 times less likely than a non-Muslim to be interviewed for the same job.⁸¹ They are also often collectively suspected of harbouring sympathies for jihadist violence, and targeted by a number of populist right-wing parties whose success largely relies on an instrumentation of Islamophobic anxieties.⁸²

Yet, in *Eurabia*, Muslims are all-powerful. According to Bat Ye’or, they “influence strongly both religious and political developments” in Europe, without hindrance, from their “mosques and cultural

⁷⁶ Kundnani refers to the contradiction common to both antisemitism and Islamophobia, that sees Jews/Muslims as members of a subhuman category, yet at the same time as “a secret class above society that manipulates events”. See Kundnani, *The Muslims are coming!* 255-56.

⁷⁷ Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania have nominal Muslim majorities. Russia has a proportionally larger Muslim population than any western European country. But Muslims in these countries are – so to speak – indigenous. I would like here to limit myself to Muslims perceived as immigrants or descendants of immigrants.

⁷⁸ Olivier Roy, *Secularism confronts Islam* (New York ; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2007). 84.

⁷⁹ For an overview and a rebuttal of this discussion see Bobby S. Sayyid, *A fundamental fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism* (London: Zed, 1997). 36-46.

⁸⁰ Patrick Simon, “La discrimination : contexte institutionnel et perception par les immigrés,” *Hommes & migrations* 1211(1998).

⁸¹ Claire L Adida, David D Laitin, and Marie-Anne Valfort, “Identifying barriers to Muslim integration in France,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107, no. 52 (2010).

⁸² Farid Hafez, “Shifting borders: Islamophobia as common ground for building pan-European right-wing unity,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 5 (2014).

centres”.⁸³ Any declaration by an EU official that is not hostile to Muslims is a sign of *their* hold over Europe. They control docile European institutions, which were established to serve their interests, they freely infiltrate the media and the universities to change European culture at will, and they are gradually reaching their ultimate goal, the abolition of European nation-states and their inclusion into the Eurabia super-structure under the aegis of *jihad*. All of this, without any impediment, as nothing can oppose their supernatural powers.

Central to the re-imagination of Jews and Muslims as the masters in full control of our destinies is the transmutation of benign organisations into omnipotent locations where the planetary conspiracy is being planned and executed. Some readers of *The Protocols* had identified the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, an organisation merely promoting welfare and education in the Jewish Diaspora, as the occult force behind the world Jewish conspiracy.⁸⁴ Bat Ye’or similarly turns the EAD into the command room of a conspiratorial network that controls “business and finance, media and publications, academia and church, throughout the EU” from behind the scenes⁸⁵; its later avatar the Euro-Med partnership is supposed to guide the production of films⁸⁶, in addition to school textbooks.⁸⁷ Other regions or blocks are not assumed to wield such supernatural powers, for instance European partnership with the African Union is not construed as a conspiracy to Africanise Europe. In Bat Ye’or’s demonology, only Muslims are endowed with such supernatural might.

3. *The European fifth column*

But one of the most striking parallels between the two theories is that the conspiracy is enabled by a European fifth column. In *The Protocols*, Jews are assisted in the pursuit of their apocalyptic designs by groups of Gentile political activists: “our fighting forces [are] Socialists, Anarchists, Communists” (Protocol III. B). In late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century antisemitism, one observes a well-documented association between socialism and anarchism on the one hand and Jewishness on the other. These associations culminated with the Bolshevik Revolution, seen by antisemites as yet another Jewish plot.⁸⁸ Socialists were seen as the natural allies of the Jews not only because Jews were overrepresented in their ranks, but also because socialists were internationalists perceived as lacking loyalty to a nation-state (similarly to Jews themselves, or so did the perception go). Thus they could easily be re-imagined as the modern-day *Judenknecht* or servants of the Jews.

In Bat Ye’or’s demonology, the European institutions play a similar role as the *Muslimenknecht*. Their supranational character is directly comparable to the socialists’ perceived lack of loyalty to a nation-state: “As in the former Soviet Union or a virtual Communist empire, identities are to be destroyed in order to dissolve diversity into a uniform anonymous humanity.”⁸⁹ When referring to the European institutions, Bat Ye’or often means the EAD but also the EEC itself (later the EU) and a number of programmes such as the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. At a fundamental level, however, there is no clear distinction: she considers the European institutions globally to be active co-plotters alongside Muslims, although from a subaltern position (as we saw it, the European project itself is rooted in an attempt to ally Europe and the Arab world against the United States). This betrayal of Christians by other Christians is not new in Bat Ye’or’s view. She argues that what allowed Muslims to conquer an “overwhelmingly Christian” population immediately after the advent of Islam was the

⁸³ Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*. 36.

⁸⁴ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*. 65-7.

⁸⁵ Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*. 208.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁸⁸ See for instance André Gerrits, *The myth of Jewish communism: A historical interpretation* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009).

⁸⁹ Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*. 235.

“support and collaboration of Christian princes, patriarchs, and army commanders”: “these betrayals”, committed for “ambition and financial interest”, “triggered the Islamization of millions of Christians”.⁹⁰ I should here add that it is precisely this European fifth column that Breivik targeted when he massacred 69 members the Norwegian Labour Party’s youth movement on the island of Utøya. Indeed, in the Norwegian context the fifth column is embodied by the country’s social-democrats.

One qualification is here in order. The text of *The Protocols* suggests that the European fifth columnists who help Jews are no more than pawns on a chessboard. Consider for instance this passage on Freemasonry, another group presumed to be in bed with the Jews: “Gentile masonry, blindly serves as a screen for us and our objects” (Protocol IV, A). It is suggested that Freemasonry’s contribution towards the goals of the Elders of Zion is involuntary. In *Eurabia*, however, as discussed earlier, the European institutions willingly and consciously assist the Eurabian project.

I tried in this section to focus on some of the more striking affinities and parallels between *The Protocols* and *Eurabia*. But one could find other analogies, for instance the financial power of the enemy. There is a remarkable parallel between the unlimited resources of Jewish finance as assumed in *The Protocols* and the Arab League’s equally unlimited stock of petrodollars as assumed in *Eurabia*. One could also claim that the myth of Islamisation is the latest incarnation of the recurring theme of the “death of the west”⁹¹, of which the world Jewish conspiracy was an earlier manifestation.

Conclusion

In his classical *Warrant for genocide*, Cohn confided that he kept “coming across” an idea: “a conviction that Jews – all Jews everywhere in the world – form a conspiratorial body set on ruining and then dominating the rest of mankind”.⁹² What Cohn had stumbled upon was *The Protocols*’ strategy of racialisation of the Jews, presented to the reader as as many links in a planetary conspiracy. What explains their participation in this conspiracy is their nature, or *essence*, as Jews. It is this process of racialisation that I tried to highlight in this article. Other types of racialisation – biological, cultural or religious – are only implicit as no definition of the Jew is offered. What really makes Jews Jews, is that they all are, in some way or the other, and as a result of their essence, complicit in a scheme to dominate the world. I called that process conspiratorial racialisation.

My second argument, is that the process of conspiratorial racialisation in *The Protocols* is directly comparable to that deployed in conspiracy theories of Islamisation, chiefly *Eurabia*. Bat Ye’or, unlike the author of *The Protocols*, goes to some length to define Muslims, or rather their unchanging Islamic essence, which she calls *jihad*. This definition goes hand in hand with her strategy to racialise Muslims as the agents of the Eurabian project. A psychological feature, conspiracy, is presented as a fundamental and unchanging feature of Muslimness. Muslims cannot help but contribute towards *Eurabia*; this is their nature, as if a mystical impulse rendered them incapable of resisting the inner call of conspiracy.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 34-35.

⁹¹ For a useful study, see Luiza Bialasiewicz, “The death of the West’: Samuel Huntington, Oriana Fallaci and a new moral geopolitics of births and bodies,” *Geopolitics* 11, no. 4 (2006).

⁹² Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*. xii.

My third objective in this article was to build on the intuition that antisemitism and Islamophobia shared discursive dynamics, by drawing attention to strikingly similar strategies of demonisation and racialisation as illustrated by conspiracy theories. I hope that this analysis highlighted the necessity to further analyse the exact relationship between antisemitism and Islamophobia. Said suggested – albeit in passing – that the two “stemmed from the same source”. Anidjar surmised that Jews and Arabs/Muslims were essentially conflated by Semitic philologists. Meer and Modood put the emphasis on investigating racialisation so that we can apply the sociology of race to improve our understanding of Islamophobia (and antisemitism). It seems to me incontrovertible that all these authors are right, and I would argue that in a period of heightened tensions, when political parties thrive for simply posing as “anti-Islamisation”, there is much to be learnt from a dialogical perspective on antisemitism. However, the scholar interested in this matter must prepare himself for acrimonious attacks. I hope that my brief discussion of the academic support that Bat Ye’or enjoys has opened my reader’s eyes to the difficulties ahead. There is still very clearly a hierarchy of racisms: some are more unacceptable than others.

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